



## 24th Legislative District

# Legislative Report 2007

Summer 2007

Dear Neighbors,

Another session of the state Legislature is over. We were honored to serve the people who live on the Olympic Peninsula.

During this session, we supported and sponsored legislation that directly enhances the quality of life in the 24th Legislative District, helping our schools, promoting clean energy, retaining local jobs and making sure our local businesses can thrive.

Please visit our Web sites for information on our work in Olympia, and let us know if you have any questions or ideas.

Sincerely,

Sen. Jim Hargrove

Rep. Lynn Kessler

Rep. Kevin Van De Wege



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## 24th Legislative District **Legislative Report 2007**



**Sen.  
Jim Hargrove**

### **Committees for 2007:**

Human Services & Corrections  
(Chair)

Judiciary

Natural Resources, Ocean &  
Recreation

### **Bills for 2007:**

#### **Wise investments in crime prevention - fewer crimes, fewer victims, more accountability**

- Half of the criminal offenders who have served time in a corrections facility eventually re-offend, so we're getting tough on crime by preventing it. By working to reduce recidivism we stop crime up-front, reducing the number of crime victims and freeing resources to go after offenders.
- Working together with law enforcement and corrections officials, I crafted reforms to the way offenders re-enter our society by requiring them to participate in education, treatment, and work programs to earn their way toward supervised release.
- Training inmates to be something besides criminals is common sense — and good public policy. A constitutional amendment I sponsored allows prison labor programs to provide inmates with a way to earn money for victim restitution while learning marketable job skills to rely upon when they are released, thus reducing recidivism — and the number of future victims.

### **Child safety**

Every child deserves a loving, stable and nurturing environment — one that cultivates a child's full potential. While preserving the family unit is important, a child's well-being is the highest priority. In order to provide for the safety of children in Washington, we passed bills to:

- provide court oversight of children who are removed from their home multiple times;
- require fingerprint background checks and review the child abuse and neglect complaint histories of all foster and adoptive parents, kinship care provider or other relative seeking to care for a child in state care; and,
- require the new Department of Early Learning to conduct background checks of child care providers and employees.



### **Local economic development**

- Local communities deserve to have local control of their economic development dollars and the projects they fund. Senate Bill 5557 will help rural economies keep a larger portion of the sales taxes they are already paying, and local communities can decide what economic development projects will give them the most bang for their buck.



**Rep.  
Lynn Kessler**  
*House Majority Leader*

#### **Committees for 2007:**

Appropriations  
Rules  
Executive Rules



## **Bills I prime-sponsored in 2007: Preserving Manufacturing Jobs in the Timber Industry.**

In order to help preserve manufacturing jobs in the timber industry, I prime sponsored HB 1513, which will reduce the Business & Occupation Tax on sales of standing timber. It also exempts such sales from real estate excise taxes within a certain time frame. Additionally, small timber harvesters with gross receipts over \$100,000 will now only pay B&O tax on the portion over \$100,000, instead of the entire amount. This provides some consistency and fairness in the tax code for an industry that provides many family-wage jobs in the 24th District.

## **Funding our state parks**

Finding a source of stable, long-term funding for our state parks is a priority of mine. Last session, I succeeded in eliminating the day-use fees from our state parks, so that they could be enjoyed by all regardless of income level. With passage of HB 2275, individuals can voluntarily donate five dollars when they renew their vehicles each year. This money will go to a fund dedicated to maintenance and operation of our state parks, and is expected to generate up to \$2 million for the next biennium.



## **Protecting our freedom of the press**

People in power who have an interest in keeping information from the public shouldn't be allowed to bury that information from the public eye. Members of the media should not be forced to testify in court or reveal their confidential sources. Otherwise, we potentially lose the kind of high-quality, investigative journalism that protects and informs the public. My "Reporter Shield Law" (HB 1366) helps ensure that our media can continue to serve as consumer watchdog and protector of the public trust.

## **Protecting your right to know**

So-called "sunshine laws" are important because they allow the public access to government records. Freedom of information and open government are central to the public's trust in government. I sponsored HB 1445 to create a public records exemptions accountability committee to review all exemptions to public records laws. The committee will include four members of the public. The bill also clarified the existing public records statute, so that it is easier to understand.







## 24th Legislative District Legislative Report 2007



**Rep.  
Kevin Van De Wege**  
*House Assistant Majority Whip*

### **Committees for 2007:**

Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Appropriations Subcommittee on  
General Government & Audit Review  
Technology, Energy & Communications  
Joint Committee on Veterans &  
Military Affairs

## **Bills for 2007:**

### **Common-sense eminent domain reform**

Being forced to give up property, even with compensation, can be emotionally and financially difficult. Not providing proper notification to an owner makes this even worse—and is completely unacceptable.

People don't have to worry about surprise eminent domain decisions now. We passed my legislation, HB 1458, requiring entities using eminent domain to give at least 15 days notice through certified mail.

I also supported other eminent domain reforms, which would have taken other steps to help property owners and I look forward to working on these again next year.

### **Partnering business and research to create jobs**

In places like Silicon Valley and the North Carolina Research Triangle, research institutions and business help each other succeed. When a professor or student achieves in the lab, jobs develop nearby to put that idea into the real world.

With my Innovation Partnership Zones bill (HB 1091), areas on the Peninsula can apply to be one of these job-creation zones. I was also happy to see \$5 million secured in the state's construction budget to provide upfront funds for Innovation Zones. Areas will apply for grant money from this fund, which can be used for infrastructure to draw in businesses.

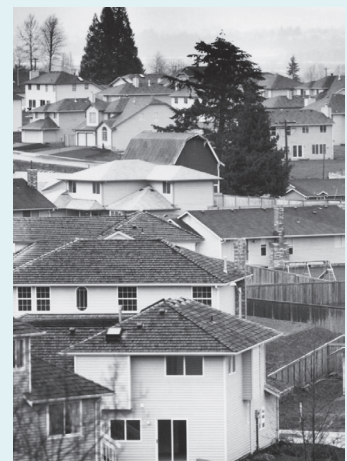
We need policies like this to continue strengthening our state's business climate. In this effort, I also introduced and passed legislation to increase tax credits for businesses adding jobs in rural areas (HB 1566).

### **Efficient government and property tax relief**

Almost every homeowner I know worries about property taxes. Our communities are great places to live and home values are rising to match demand. Being a part of a great community shouldn't mean being taxed out of your home.

***I-747's One Percent Cap Needs to be Codified.*** Legislation I cosponsored (HJR 2117) would have kept the initiative in law, limiting increases to the one percent mark. Unfortunately there wasn't enough support this session, but I will work to build support for next session. If this initiative is overturned in the courts I will support a special session to reinstate this one percent cap.

***Taking a closer look at government spending.*** Through my work on the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government and Audit Review, I helped prioritize where your tax dollars should be invested. We also identified areas needing to be cut, saving hundreds of millions, for example, in our state's computer information services.

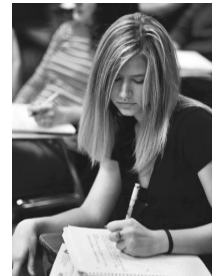




## Education

### WASL: Keeping high standards, better testing

Because each student learns differently, the 2007 Legislature set up alternative assessments so students will have multiple pathways for demonstrating their knowledge. Students may use scores from equally rigorous standardized tests, such as SAT, ACT and Advanced Placement exams, as an alternative for all WASL subjects.



The state will also examine how to make the math portion of the WASL better, delaying that section as a graduation requirement up to five years. The Legislature also allocated funding for **750 new math and science teachers** in our state, to help boost student achievement in these very important subjects.

### All-day kindergarten: Getting a head start

As a state we've made early learning a priority. Education is the great equalizer and starting early is the best way for all students to achieve. Our youngest learners will benefit from legislation passed this session to phase in all-day kindergarten, beginning with the state's highest poverty schools. Playing catch-up for time lost in a child's education is a costly, difficult path. Through this initiative, we'll invest early and increase achievement.



## Health care

Washington took giant strides to become a national leader in providing access to affordable, high-quality health care. Measures passed by the 2007 Legislature:

- extend health care coverage to an additional 39,000 uninsured children by 2009;
  - design a state-supported reinsurance program to help make premiums more affordable for employees of small businesses;
  - expand enrollment in the state Basic Health Plan, and require performance measures to be set up to hold local public health districts accountable for spending; and,
- close the Medicare Part D prescription gap that forced low-income seniors and disabled citizens to make a co-payment for each prescription drug.

## Timber and natural resources

This year, we worked hard to make sure our local timber industry stays viable while moving toward the future with clean energy and biofuels made from forestry products. The University of Washington Olympic Natural Resources Center in Forks received \$150,000 for forestry research — plus an additional \$50,000 for marine research. We created a cooperative agreement relating to the timber harvest excise taxation of timber harvests in the Quinault Indian Reservation. And we're committed to making sure those who work in the timber industry, including the truckers who help it thrive, can support a safe hauling operation.





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### Budget

With the support of a strong state economy, the Legislature passed a budget that builds security for Washington's future by making significant investments in education and health care, while setting aside money for the future. It's a sound budget that makes sustainable progress and puts the state on a strong track for the future.

Our education investments include fully funding voter approved I-728 for smaller class sizes and I-732 for better teacher pay, as well as funding all-day kindergarten and significant investments in special education.

Meanwhile, our fiscally responsible, **no-new-taxes budget** left us with a surplus — and an opportunity to let voters decide whether the state should have a constitutionally mandated Rainy Day Fund. If approved, each fiscal year, 1 percent of general state revenues — or about \$130 million — will be deposited into the account. That money could be tapped by a majority vote of the Legislature if forecasted state employment growth for any fiscal year is less than 1 percent, or if the governor declares an emergency resulting from a catastrophic natural disaster that requires immediate government action to protect life or public safety.

### Local investments for the Olympic Peninsula

Along with statewide investments in education, health care, community protection and economic development, the Olympic Peninsula will see many local benefits from the 2007-09 operating, capital and transportation budgets, including:

- Port Angeles Graving Dock settlement of \$15.48 million
- \$5 million in improvements to the turbine/administration building at the Satsop Development Park
- \$3.8 million in improvements to Peninsula College
- \$3.6 million for improvements to local recreation facilities, parks and trails
- \$5 million for Grays Harbor Wind Project
- Funding to keep a rescue tug stationed at Neah Bay for the 2007-08 storm season, with requested federal funding for a year-round tug
- Various transportation projects, including the widening of Highway 101 between Sequim and Port Angeles, and keeping Hood Canal Bridge improvements on track



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